

## **Controlled and responsible approach delivers on cost of living pressures**

Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria welcomed the Baillieu Government's first State budget for carrying through on its election promises, which will address the pressures being faced by many seniors.

"The Government has taken a controlled and responsible approach to this Budget," said Ms Sue Hendy, Chief Executive Officer, COTA Victoria. "There is something for everyone in the Budget, with initiatives and allocations that will please many groups, including seniors."

"The big ticket item for low income seniors, is the boost to concessions and measures to help cut the cost of water and electricity expected increases. This includes the election promise to extend the Winter Electricity concession to year round, which has already been implemented. The additional increase to the cap on water and sewerage concessions will go a long way to alleviating the expected increases in these costs."

"Rebates for energy efficient appliances, and concessions for municipal charges and gas for low income households, will also benefit some seniors."

"The dental and oral health needs of low income older people have finally received the urgent attention it requires, with additional mobile health services for rural areas, additional funding to address waiting lists, and for denture care for seniors unable to access services in the public system."

"COTA is very pleased to see that the needs of older people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have been acknowledged in this Budget," said Ms Hendy. "Increased interpreter and translation services, especially in hospitals will help many people for whom English is not their preferred language get the information and services they need. We have advocated for this for a long time."

"The participation of older people as an area for funding, beyond health and aged care, seems to herald a more constructive approach to ageing. Participation of older people in sport and recreational activities, as well as connection to their local communities and services are important measures to enhance the well-being of our seniors."

"Among the world's leading thinkers on ageing, the consensus opinion is that we need government leaders who look beyond the election cycle and plan for the state's growing proportion of older people. That means a cohesive framework that takes a holistic view of ageing, along with adequate funding, to make Victoria the most age friendly state in Australia. We look forward to the outcomes of the recently announced Parliamentary Inquiry into Opportunities for Older Victorians and the longer term benefits this will bring senior Victorians," says Ms Hendy.

### **Other areas of the budget that will have benefits for older people:**

- Better accessibility to public transport for people with disabilities
- The additional funds that will flow into the health system – in particular, the commitment to additional hospital beds across the state, with 100 to be delivered in the first 12 months and funding to address emergency department delays and hospital waiting lists
- Expansion of community mental health services
- Increased funding for palliative care
- Focus on rural and regional issues, including transport and hospital funding.

"We look forward to working with the Government on the longer term strategies to make sure pensioners and other vulnerable seniors realise the benefits of many of the Government's budget initiatives."

*The voice of Victoria's seniors, COTA Victoria is the peak representative body of older individuals and organisations representing seniors. COTA is a non-profit organisation committed to human rights, social justice and the eradication of ageism – our mission is to mobilise older people and those who work with them, to age well in a just society.*

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